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Ministry of Advanced Education

$1.25M INVESTED IN CANADA-INDIA ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP

ABBOTSFORD – Economic relations between British Columbia and India will strengthen due to a $1.25-million investment from the Province for a new regional research chair at the University College of the Fraser Valley, said Abbotsford-Mount Lehman MLA Michael de Jong today.

"The appointment of B.C.'s second regional innovation chair is an example of how this government is supporting innovative research in the province," said de Jong. "The new chair, DJ Sandhu, will supply effective, appropriate and practical research to local businesses helping them to capitalize on opportunities between British Columbia and India."

The BC Regional Innovation Chair on Canada-India Business and Economic Development will help businesses in the Fraser Valley and Lower Mainland region take advantage of the opportunities offered by the huge Indian market. The new chair, with support from the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies at UCFV, will provide local businesses with the expertise and research necessary for them to access the fast-growing Indian economy and other overseas markets.

Sandhu is an MBA who combines teaching at the University College of the Fraser Valley with management consultation here and in India. He has extensive experience developing international markets and launching and running companies involved in financing new manufacturing ventures.

"By attracting and retaining top researchers like DJ Sandhu, a body of work will be developed in B.C. that will improve our economic ties with India, benefiting both countries now and into the future," said Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell. "The new Chair supports government's vision to enhance the province's unique competitive advantage by our proximity, cultural ties, and natural connections to the Asia-Pacific."

The Province provided a $1.25-million contribution for the BC Regional Innovation Chair on Canada-India Business and Economic Development with matching funding from hundreds of community supporters to bring the total endowment for the chair to $2.5 million.

"The establishment of this research chair is a direct result of a strong partnership with the Province and incredible support from our local communities through our Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies," said Sandhu. "As a result, we feel a tremendous sense of responsibility to get it right. There is a recognized need for the services we will provide and the strong interest expressed by local businesses to date indicates that we'll be kept very busy."

B.C. regional innovation chairs are designed to support applied research, development and innovation that will bolster regional economic and social development in all areas of the province; foster the development of highly qualified people in areas relevant to regional social and economic development; and foster collaboration between post-secondary institutions.

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The $56.25-million Leading Edge Endowment Fund will support 20 leadership chairs and nine regional innovation chairs across B.C., with matching funds to be secured by post-secondary institutions from external partners. Since 2001, British Columbia has invested over $1.5 billion in research and innovation across the province.

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1 backgrounder(s) attached.

Media contact:

Corinna Filion
Communications Manager
250 952-6400
250 812-7977 (cell)

Kim Lawrence
UCFV Communications Director
604 864-4611
604 302-6257 (cell)

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LEEF – B.C. REGIONAL INNOVATION CHAIRS

Professor DJ Sandhu
UCFV business professor DJ Sandhu brings more than 20 years of marketing and teaching experience to this new position. He has a strong background in marketing consulting for Fortune 500 companies such as Johnson & Johnson. He earned his BBA and MBA at Simon Fraser University and also teaches business there. He has extensive experience developing international markets and launching companies involved in financing new manufacturing ventures.

Since 2004, Sandhu has served as a special advisor to UCFV. He is also a member of the India Market Advisory Group, the working group of the Province's Asia Pacific Trade Council.

Sandhu has been formally working on UCFV's India initiatives since 2004 in his special advisor role. He played a key role in the establishment of the UCFV Bachelor of Business Administration degree program in Chandigarh, India, and in the creation of partnerships with several Indian post-secondary institutions, including Panjab University, which has established a Canadian Studies centre, and Guru Nanak Dev University.

In 2006, he helped UCFV become the only Canadian post-secondary institution to establish an education society – along with a new campus – in India. The society is a platform available for other post-secondary institutions to use to launch their programs in India without having to collaborate directly with an Indian partner.

This particular research chair grew out of a desire on UCFV's part to play a role in fostering economic and academic links between British Columbia and India, reflecting the fact that the university college is located in the Fraser Valley, home of one of the largest Indo-Canadian communities in Canada. Hundreds of community supporters matched the Province's contribution to reach the total of $2.5 million for the chair endowment.

The Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies at UCFV
UCFV's Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies, is designed to provide information for people wanting to do business with India and to further opportunities between our two countries. The centre, sister organization to the Canadian Studies Centre at Panjab University in India, is also the home of the B.C. Regional Innovation Chair on Canada-India Business and Economic Development.

UCFV offers 24 courses in its Canada-India Studies program and plans to soon be offering a certificate, minor and ultimately a major in Canada-India Studies.

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